

**From:** ABGProviders  
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**To:** ABGProviders  
**Subject:** IMPORTANT NOTICE: New Broadband Service Locator and Customer Attestation Arrangements [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE - ENHANCEMENTS TO THE BROADBAND SERVICE LOCATOR AND CUSTOMER ATTESTATION PROCESS**

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (the Department) is providing the following advice regarding changes to the Broadband Service Locator (BSL) and Customer Attestation processes used under the *Australian Broadband Guarantee* (ABG) funding program.

These changes, foreshadowed in Section 2.4.1 of the ABG program Guidelines (the Guidelines), have been designed in response to Provider feedback and Government audit requirements.

The changes will reduce the administrative workload of registered service Providers by removing the need for them to contact multiple ISPs in order to establish a Customer's eligibility for an ABG service as well as the need to distribute Customer Attestation forms. The process of lodging claims for payment under the ABG program has also been streamlined.

The new arrangements do not change the eligibility criteria of the ABG but will replace the processes for determining eligibility outlined in Section 2.4 of the Guidelines from 14 August 2007.

### **1. The new Broadband Service Locator (BSL) process**

The new BSL and the Broadband Customer Online Management System (BCOMS) will now play a key role in determining broadband availability and Customer eligibility.

Customers, or any person acting with authority of the Customer, will now be able to submit Customer details on the new BSL which will set in motion a process that will ultimately lead to Customers being able to connect to a broadband service of their choice.

All ISPs (with the exception of ADSL1 service providers, see below) will be invited to participate in an online process that will allow them to review the location details of Customers seeking to gain a broadband service.

ISPs will have log-in access to an online interface displaying Customer information and will be able to click a check-box to indicate that they are able to provide a Metro-comparable service on a commercial basis to the Customer. These ISPs are referred to as 'Category A' Providers. Each Customer record will remain visible to them for seven days.

### **A Metro-comparable service**

A 'Metro-comparable Service' is defined in accordance with section 1.5 of the ABG program Guidelines and refers to a broadband service with the following features:

- (a) access to the Internet at a peak data speed of at least 512/128 kbps and 1000 MB per month usage allowance (with no restrictions on usage time);
- (b) a price to the Customer over three years of no more than \$2500 (GST inclusive) including equipment, installation, connection, account establishment, travel costs and ongoing provision of the service. Providers can seek to claim travel costs where relevant (refer section 4.5.2.3); and
- (c) the Provider or commercial ISP offering the broadband service can install the service within a reasonable period of time. (Note, a reasonable period of time in this context will ordinarily be within thirty [30] calendar days of the service order being processed or any other longer period of time determined by the Department to be reasonable.)

To protect a Customer's personal information, their details will be limited to the latitude and longitude of their premises, the state or territory in which they are located, and the first eight digits of their phone number (including the area code). This information will be sufficient to determine whether the Customer falls within wireless coverage or is able to be connected to a wire-line service.

### **2. Category A Providers**

Considering the large number of ADSL1 ISPs operating in the market, the Department will assist Customers to determine ADSL1 availability directly. The Department will use information sourced from Telstra, such as exchange locations and service areas, number ranges, port availability and physical distance from an exchange.

Where the Department determines that a Metro-comparable ADSL1 service is likely to be available or where Category A Providers indicate that they are able to supply a Metro-comparable service to the location or to the phone number, the Customer will be notified of those service Providers via mail. The Customer may then follow up with their preferred Provider.

These Customers will only be provided with details of the next tier of Providers (Category B) if they satisfy the Department that a Metro-comparable ADSL1 service cannot be obtained due to any remaining technical limitations, and there are no alternative commercial services available at Metro-comparable levels for the purpose of the ABG.

### **3. Category B Providers**

When a Category A Provider is not available to supply coverage to a premises (as determined by the Department's knowledge of existing network coverage or if no Category A Providers confirm their ability to offer a service to the premises using the online review process), the Customer will not be notified. The Customer record will instead be made available to the relevant Category B Provider, whose registered service area covers the Customer's address.

The Category B Provider will also receive access to a Customer record when a Customer provides proof (to the Department's satisfaction) that the Category A Provider has subsequently indicated that they cannot technically Connect and Supply a service (exempting other reasons such as declining the Customer for financial reasons).

The Category B Provider will have seven days to verify that they are able to Connect and Supply the Customer with a registered ABG service. The Customer will then be notified of the outcome.

As Service Areas registered for the ABG will not generally overlap, in most cases only one ABG Service Provider will be able to review a Customer record. Where more than one Category B Provider is available, it will be the Customer's choice as to their preferred Provider.

#### **4. Category C Providers**

When it is determined that no Category A or B Provider can offer a service to a Customer's premises, the Customer will not be notified and their record will be made available to Category C Providers for review.

In addition, if a Customer is located in an area with no existing terrestrial network coverage, their location details will immediately be made available to Category C Providers without the need for review by Category A or B Providers.

The Customer will receive advice regarding the Category C Providers that are available and are free to choose between the Providers that are identified.

#### **5. ABG Service Pack**

Where the BSL Process determines that a Customer is eligible for a Service from a Category B or C Provider, the Department will mail them an ABG Service Pack within 7 to 21 days. This pack will contain a cover letter with a list of Category B or C Providers that have indicated their ability to offer a Service to a Customer premises. A Customer is free to contact the listed Provider(s) and request their preferred broadband service.

The list of available Category B or C Providers will also be sent to the email address nominated at time of the Customer's registration on the BSL.

The Customer may also receive details of non-registered ISPs offering broadband services which do not meet the ABG thresholds for Metro-comparability. The Customer may choose such a service; however, no incentive payment will be made.

The pack will also contain a Customer Attestation form on which the Customer must attest to their eligibility to obtain a Service under the ABG. The BSL will generate a unique identification number for each registered Customer which will be included in the Customer's Results Pack. This number and attestation should be given to the Provider that supplies the Customer with a Program Service and must accompany any claim for payment under the ABG.

An ABG Help Flyer will also be enclosed and provides each Customer with information about the ABG including relevant contact numbers should they wish to follow up on any aspects of their Service or have problems.

#### **6. Lodgement of claims in BCOMS**

Claims must only be lodged after the program service has been Connected and Supplied to the Customer. This means that an eligible Customer has a broadband connection at their premises and they are actively receiving a program service from this connection.

##### **Actively receiving**

At a minimum, actively receiving a relevant service is when:

- the Customer is able to connect a computer (or other relevant device) at their eligible premises to the respective service without any further deployment of infrastructure, cabling or CPE by the Provider; and
- the Customer has entered into a contract with the Provider for the provision of the service. (See section 4.3.3 of the Guidelines for further details about Customer contracts).

A claim will only be accepted into BCOMS where it is accompanied by a valid BSL identification number that will be matched with the Customer's eligibility as determined by the BSL process. Using the number will enable the majority of the form fields to fill automatically with relevant Customer information data. The Service Provider will then be required to populate the remaining fields.

A list of these additional fields will be available shortly. BCOMS will also allow the bulk upload of multiple claims.

It should be noted that although a claim may be successfully uploaded into BCOMS, it will only be approved once the Department has received a valid Customer Attestation form which must be provided on a CD/DVD as a PDF file.

#### **7. BCOMS testing period**

The Department will make available an initial testing period to allow registered Providers to familiarise themselves with the new claims process. The testing facility will allow registered Providers to see the system responses which checks for duplicate claims, service area coverage and other verification processes.

The Department has also enhanced the level of information contained within error messages generated by BCOMS to assist Providers when lodging claims.

The Department strongly recommends that Service Providers use the claims testing facility in BCOMS to determine the results for each claim, before lodging a claim for payment.

Service Providers will be able lodge test claims both individually and using a bulk upload facility with BCOMS from 14 August 2007 until 20 August 2007. This will ensure registered Providers have sufficient time to confirm their operational systems are compatible with the new BSL process. Service Providers will be able to lodge actual claims from 27 August 2007.

#### **8. Customer confirmation of service**

The ABG Help Flyer will direct Customers to confirm the receipt of their service and provide feedback to the Department by logging onto the Department's website. It should be noted that the failure of a Customer to confirm the receipt of their service will not, in itself, prevent the payment of a claim for that Customer's service. However, the Department may still seek repayment of a claim if, through investigation, it is subsequently established that the claim is invalid.

Customers can also report that their requested service has not been connected at all by ringing a 1800 number as listed on their ABG Help Flyer and quoting their BSL identification number.

The Department will continue to ensure the validity of claims for payment under the program through a number of separate strategies including data matching, contact with Customers and audits of Providers.

#### **9. Outstanding Customer Attestation forms obtained under the *Australian Broadband Guarantee (transitional period)***

The Department will not accept Australian Broadband Guarantee (transitional period) Customer Attestation forms under the full ABG Program. Where a Service Provider has Customer Attestation forms from applications received under the ABG (*transitional period*) but for which a service has not yet been installed, the Provider is required to enter these Customer details into the BSL. This will result in the new ABG Customer Attestation forms being sent to the Customer.

#### **10. Record keeping obligations**

A Provider is required to maintain the original copy of the Customer Attestation form. A Service Provider should, in addition to maintaining the other records described in Section 4.6.1 of the Guidelines, keep a full record of the checks it has undertaken to test its ability to provide the network coverage to each individual location reviewed under the new BSL process. Details on the installation of the service to the Customer should also be kept.

#### **11. Associated changes to the Guidelines**

The changes to the BSL and Customer Attestation process will take effect from the start of the ABG (*full program*) on 14 August 2007. The Department will not accept any claim for payment under the ABG (*full program*) that is not accompanied by an appropriate BSL

identification number. The new processes will be formalised in a variation of the ABG Program Guidelines.

Please note that this advice does not constitute in any way an invitation or offer to participate in the ABG. Registration under the ABG is dependent on a successful outcome from the current application process and the service Provider entering into a Funding Deed with the Department.

**12. Further questions**

Further questions relating to the new BSL process or Customer Attestation process should be sent via email to [abgproviders@dcita.gov.au](mailto:abgproviders@dcita.gov.au) with 'BCOMS Issues' in the subject line.

ABGProviders